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ABSTRACT

The central issue in education today is whether education has kept up with the fundamental and far-reaching changes in the economic and social structure of this nation. We must have a new ideal of American education grounded in the practical and hard-earned lessons of the last 10 years: that children who come to school healthy are engaged and ready to learn; that for too many children we inadvertently created a tyranny of low expectations and a watered-down curriculum; that excellency and equity are compatible; that teachers teach better if they have real time to learn new techniques and develop meaningful lessons and assessments; that schools do well when they draw on the resources of the community. It is time to move from the negative crisis of education to a positive solution. America's Goals 2000 is the centerpiece of our efforts to create a world-class education for every child. As we look to reconnect our children, four new connections deserve our special attention. First, schools must find new ways to make the connection between parents, their children, and the process of learning. Second, we must reconnect with our alienated minority youth, particularly African Americans and Hispanics. Third, we must acknowledge the vital link between reform of elementary and secondary education and ongoing reform efforts in higher education. Fourth, education must connect with technology. (Recommendations for connecting families and schools and a news release summarizing Secretary Riley's remarks, both from the Department of Education, are included.) (HTH)

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Remarks Prepared For[1]
Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

State of American Education
Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
Tuesday, February 15, 1994

ED 368 500

Father O'Donovan, distinguished guests, members of the faculty and student body, ladies and gentlemen. It is my great privilege to come before you to speak about the state of American education.

A little over two years ago, a young, vigorous candidate for the Presidency of the United States began his campaign by returning to his alma mater -- to this very stage -- to speak to the students of Georgetown and to all the American people about coming times.

Bill Clinton was, as he is now, an American with a zeal for education. Whether he first got this infatuation taking Carroll Quigley's course on Western Civilization I cannot say. But I do know that a touchstone of his Presidency is rooted in principles that Carroll Quigley taught to generations of Georgetown students, namely "that the defining principle of our culture and our country is future preference, that tomorrow can be better than today and that each of us has a personal and moral responsibility to make it so."

I suspect that my love of learning ... my sense of future preference ... took a firm hold of me when I had the good fortune to attend public schools in Greenville, South Carolina and Furman University. I went to college in the fifties as some of you probably did. It was a time when "cruising" in a '57 Chevy was "in." It was also a time when we were struggling to end segregation and the era of the McCarthy hearings.

And, oh how we talked. Our minds raced from Shakespeare to politics to sports to religion and back again -- separating the important from the non-important. Those were meaningful discussions in a free and academic setting ... a setting surely still offered to students today by Georgetown and other colleges ... a setting that encourages spiritual thought, free intellectual inquiry ... the sheer joy of always talking a little faster and a little louder just to get your point across.

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[1]The Secretary may depart from prepared remarks.

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So I fell in love with learning -- and came to believe that education is the bedrock of our great democratic society -- the essential and critical element in defining America's future preference.

I come before you, then, to speak to you about what we have learned these last ten years since former Secretary of Education Ted Bell released "A Nation at Risk" --- a report that warned us about the decline in American education and that inspired many of us to look searchingly at the very structure of education.

I suggest to you today that the issue is not the latest ranking of schools or students. For some schools are excellent, some are improving, some have the remarkable capacity to change for the better, and some should never be called schools at all.

The issue is not "good," "bad" or "rank" -- but whether we are changing fast enough to save and educate this generation of young people ... whether education has kept up with the fundamental and far-reaching changes in the economic and social structure of this nation.

For it goes without saying that there is great disconnection. Too many young people come to school unprepared -- too many drift through school uninspired and bored -- too many drop out -- and too many of our "neglected majority" (the 75 percent who don't go on to a four-year college) wake up the day after graduation with no meaningful idea about what to do with their futures.

There is indeed a sense out there -- even among those young people who have climbed the educational ladder of achievement -- that this generation may be the first that has no great expectations of advancing the American Dream. And can we say that they are entirely wrong?

Is a nation truly connected to its children, child-centered, and committed to their futures when it allows one of out every five children to grow up in poverty and often with violence?

When children kill children, can we say we have listened to them with all due care? For violence is a language, a sound that always captures our attention and always too late.

If I am troubled by anything, it is this -- we seem, as a nation, to be drifting toward a new concept of childhood which says that a child can be brought into this world and allowed to fend for himself or herself. There is a disconnection here that demands our attention ... a disconnection so pervasive between adult America and the children of America that we are all losing touch with one another.

This is why we must come to the realization that we must find new

ways to give parents and families the support they need to help their children grow ... a new compact that involves all of us in an effort to reconnect children to learning. As President Clinton said in his State of the Union address', "parents who know their children's teachers and turn off the television and help with the homework and teach their kids right from wrong -- these kinds of parents can make all the difference."

So there is a moral urgency to our coming together ... a need to act ... to reconnect ... to make our schools the best in the world. Yes, public education has many problems. I am no Pollyanna. Education, like any institution in our society, can be intolerant of new thinking; bureaucratic, and reluctant to give up old habits. I am a reformer and I know how hard it is to make change happen and stick.

We also need to recognize that public education is at ground zero of almost every social, economic and cultural tension of our times -- it has been that way throughout modern history. Long before public policy is politely debated here in Washington, teachers and principals are already directly confronting violence, the breakdown of the family, ethnic and racial tension and the growing mismatch between the classroom and the job market.

They deal up front with the education needs of new immigrants, the rise of teenage pregnancy, the abuse of drugs, alcohol and the crisis of AIDS. And here I am not just talking about the urban school. These teachers and principals, parents and volunteers should be honored for their commitment, for their determined idealism and for what they are saying to us.

They tell us that the cause of education is not lost, despite the musings of some that public education is staggering on its last legs. They see -- as I see in my travels throughout America -- the resiliency, the capacity for innovation, the early beginnings of a fundamental shift away from the old assembly-line version of education to something new.

And this is something I see happening all over America. The grandmother I met in Green Bay, Wisconsin, for example, going out of her way to teach a child how to read in the hallway at Tank Elementary School.

And Walter Annenberg who intuitively understood the need to reconnect when he challenged all Americans by committing to public education a gift of $500 million last December.

These Americans and so many others recognize that public education, for all of its many problems, remains a strong, resilient and beloved institution in our society -- one with the capacity -- if we will only help it -- to make the new

connections so vital to the education of our children.

So we must have a new ideal of American education grounded in the practical and hard-earned lessons of the last ten years. Lessons that we have come to understand, school by school, child by child ... lessons that serve our schools and our children well.

We learned that children who come to school healthy -- who have gotten their shots, participated in early childhood programs and have had parents read with them -- are children who are engaged and ready to learn. They are connected.

We learned that, despite our best intentions, some of our best laid plans had gone awry ... that categorizing and pulling out our children ... telling them to just learn the minimum and to expect nothing more from themselves ... led them to do just that.

For too many of our children, we inadvertently created a tyranny of low expectations. A watered-down curriculum came to be and still remains, to my mind, the surest way of turning a child who can learn into an angry, illiterate 19-year-old dropout ... without hope.

We learned that excellence and equity are not incompatible. Income and race have little, if anything, to do with the act of learning. Yes, it helps children to have their minds engaged because caring parents have afforded them extra opportunities to learn. And, yes -- the drag of poverty can indeed pull children down.

But the sheer act of learning -- of getting smart -- is not determined at birth. All children can learn. You get smart by taking the tougher course and having the inspired teacher ... hard work really does pay off.

Children respond to the expectations we hold for them. Children who are in schools with high expectations and challenging curricula learn more than students who are found in undemanding low-level education environments.

Here is another lesson we have learned -- teachers are better teachers if they have real time to learn new skills and teaching techniques and to develop engaging lessons and meaningful assessment.

We also now know that schools do well when they make new connections -- when they involve the business community -- the arts and science communities -- when they go out and engage the university community in a common effort to raise standards -- when they link social services to the schools, if they are needed, so teachers can devote their time to teaching.

Above all, we recognize again the very old virtue that parents are often the first and most important teachers.

All this learning has led us to this critical moment in the life of this nation -- where we can, in one common effort, lift our sights and raise up American education. And not a moment too soon, for in the next ten years the number of high school graduates in America will grow by almost 25 percent.

I know there is, at times, great frustration among the American people about the education of their children ... even a hopelessness. Frustration I can understand; hopelessness I cannot.

For we know what we have to do. The time has come to move from the negative crisis of education to a positive solution. All children can learn if we have higher expectations of them and give them opportunities for a real education. This is why we must move from the reform of a few schools and the reform efforts of a few states to an entirely different scale, to include the reform of all schools for every student.

And, this I know for sure -- when the American people get fixed on something important, change occurs. When the American people put their collective mind to a problem, something good happens. We are, my friends, at that moment.

We have all fifty of this Nation's Governors moving in one direction in their support for our national education goals ... working in concert with every major education, parent and business group. We have a Congress that passed national service and direct lending reform last year, and is now on the verge of passing more education reform by the end of this session than has been passed in three decades.

The GOALS 2000 Act, the School-to-Work Act, the Safe Schools Act, the reinvention of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the reauthorization of our education research program -- they are all moving forward and toward completion by the end of this year.

GOALS 2000 is the centerpiece of our efforts to create a world-class education for every child for the 21st century -- one that gets young people connected to education early and keeps them there throughout their lives. All these important acts of Congress are part of one across-the-board effort to make higher academic standards in education a nationwide priority. And later this year, we will be proposing the reauthorization of the very important Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Above all, we have a President in the White House who has put children's education back into the federal budget for the first

time in a decade. President Clinton has made good on his campaign promise and thought long and hard about making a difference. The very nature of how we think about education in Washington has changed. Learning -- lifelong learning and literacy for all Americans -- is seen as the very basis for the rebuilding of this country.

This is why the President has invested so heavily in Head Start -- why he is working so hard to pass GOALS 2000 -- why he wants children to be able to go to school safe from violence -- and why he is committed to a fundamental rethinking of how we prepare people of all ages for work.

We did not come to Washington to be indifferent about education. We came to make a difference -- but we cannot do it alone.

All across America people are working to build new and long overdue connections. Even as I speak, for example, hundreds of educators, parents, political leaders, and members of the business community are meeting in California at an education summit.

In San Antonio, Texas, Madeleine Kunin, the Deputy Secretary of Education, has seen firsthand the coming together of the Chamber of Commerce, the University of Texas, the United Way, a major insurance company, and city and county officials -- all citizens doing their part to create early childhood family centers in every neighborhood.

So I sense in America the beginnings of the spark to make the new connections so necessary and vital to the education of our children. But here is the caution. Nothing can be accomplished if we continue to hurl political invective across the ideological divide, content with our political small talk, yet impervious to the very large needs of our children.

We cannot reconnect our young people to learning if public education continues to be condemned without relief ... if we become fixated on negative musings destructive to the future of public education.

At the same time, nothing is gained by the intransigence of some in the education community who see any outside reform or proposed innovation as unneeded, unwanted, and unnecessary.

My friends, let us heal ourselves and reconnect with one another. Let us get beyond the name calling and center ourselves on teaching and learning. The public wants higher academic standards, more accountability, and some sense that their children are getting prepared for the coming times. They do not want a conservative or a liberal, a Democratic or Republican solution to our Nation's education troubles.

The sooner we teach our children the basics -- the core subjects -- the American values of hard work, fairness, honesty, and civility -- and the new skills like computer literacy -- the more secure we will all feel about our children's future and the long-term economic future of this nation.

The American people are tuning into excellence and the need for high standards. Whether it be restoring ethics in politics ... questioning the levels of violence and sex on television and in video games ... wondering whether "shock" radio is good for the soul of this Country ... the American people are moving in a new direction.

There is no one formula for success ... no rigid Washington orthodoxy about how we can help our children learn more. Each community must find the new connections that uniquely respond to the complexity, demographics, history and needs of all of its children. This is why we believe so strongly in a participatory and voluntary process -- community-based solutions to achieve our national education goals and world-class standards.

Now, people tell me that calling for a voluntary approach to education reform is a little like voting for inertia. "Mr. Secretary," they'll say to me, "it's all too vague -- nothing will change -- where are the federal mandates in GOALS 2000?" And that is the point exactly -- we think differently. The federal government cannot mandate education reform. How would a rigid, one-size-fits-all, packaged-in-Washington approach meet the unique needs of the thousands of different schools in this Country?

It would be the wrong approach, would stifle creativity and would do nothing to foster partnerships. Reform is best when it is voluntary, inclusive and bottom-up ... when we involve parents, teachers and the entire community in putting children first. Our role -- indeed, the new federal role -- is to encourage and move reform along, to use our national education goals as a north star ... to say here is where you ought to go and here is how it can be done.

That is why we are open to almost every new way of thinking about public education. We support public school choice, the creation of charter schools, schools-within-schools, magnet schools, and efforts to expand early childhood and after-school programs. But we draw the line against using public tax dollars for private school vouchers.

Public tax dollars should be spent where they are most needed -- in public schools. Strong public schools which will enable all students to meet high-quality, challenging content and performance standards are in everybody's interest. Strong private schools play an important role in American education

through their own dedication to high standards and quality goals.

Now, some school districts may even consider contracting out the management of their schools. If they do, they must recognize that this may be one interesting option to try, but it is no panacea. Any innovation, including contracting out, will be of little use if it is simply used as a quick-fix while nothing is really done to improve teaching and learning ... to raise standards.

As we look to re-connect our children, I want to stress four new connections that deserve our special attention.

First, we must ground ourselves in reality. The break-up of the American family and the isolation of family members from each other, even in intact families, has had a profound and lasting effect on the education of our children.

As I have said many times before, parents need to slow down their lives to help their children grow. Increasingly, we Americans seem to live in a world of fax machines, car phones and beepers -- technology that is meant to speed up our lives and make us all a little bit more productive.

But I wonder if all this determination to go a little faster is such a good thing for our children? They grow up right before our eyes and before we know it, they are gone from our lives. Most parents, to their credit, work overtime trying to make ends meet to provide for their children. But in a 1993 survey on violence in schools, half the students with below-average grades reported that their parents had spent little or no time with them on school work.

I wonder whether this oversight by some parents sends a subtle but powerful message to our children that they are on their own when it comes to their education and learning. I believe all parents, regardless of their station in life or even their level of education, have the capacity and obligation to teach their children a love of learning.

To that end, I am announcing a new family involvement campaign, a movement to encourage every adult -- parents, grandparents, uncles and step-parents -- to take a special interest in the lives of our young people; to act as mentors and tutors; to instill in every child a love of learning. And we must do more. Businesses, churches, community groups -- must extend themselves even more than they do now -- to help families nurture their children to their full potential.

At the same time, schools must find new ways to make the connection between parents, their children and the process of learning. Surely, parents have a powerful role in defining how

children use their time in watching television and studying. But my concern goes deeper.

The two most powerful groups of adults who can influence the course of education in this Nation seem to be talking past each other. Teachers feel overwhelmed, frustrated and perplexed that parents are not hooked into the lives of their children. Parents, who feel a certain respect for the work of teachers, seem lost in the process of education reform.

This disconnection is of enormous consequence to the education of the coming generation. I urge education leaders to look beyond the role of parents as volunteers and fundraisers; to actively incorporate, as so many schools are now doing, parents and other adults into the process of learning. Parents create the frame; teachers help children fill in the picture.

A second new connection vital to the success of American education is the re-connection with our alienated minority youth. My good friend, the late Benjamin Mayes, the great educator and mentor of Martin Luther King, Jr., began his quest for learning on his knees after work in a field, praying -- praying to gain but one opportunity to get an education.

To our great fortune and by his determination, his prayers were answered. But here in 1994, too many young people are giving up on America and dropping out; growing cold with fury, living lives of anger, poverty and spiritual numbness.

I want to tell you how troubling it was for me to read a story in the Washington Post this Sunday by an idealistic teacher, Marc Elrich, that detailed a sense of early failure that haunts so many of our minority youth. Here are sixth-graders in the classroom, with their lives still ahead of them, who have already concluded that education has no real value to them.

The American historian, John Hope Franklin, has written extensively about this searing problem. It is no "small wonder," he writes, "that the number of black males in penal institutions is greater then the number of black males in higher education."

Doctor Franklin was speaking about the very real disconnection of young black men. But this is not just an African-American problem. I am deeply concerned about the high drop-out rate among our Hispanic-American young people; the growing sense of disconnection that so many young people of all races feel because they have no sense that a future is possible for them.

How do we begin to alter this enormously negative dynamic in our society? Could it be that in our attempt to do good -- offering pull-out programs and over-labelling students into special education classes -- we have contributed in some significant way

to a sense of classification and racial stereotyping that tells these young people early on that they will not make it in life so why even try?

And, here is a hard truth. Even in 1994, too many Americans are separated from each other by the pernicious belief that children who are poor and disadvantaged do not have what it takes to reach high levels of achievement and that no amount of learning will alter this circumstance.

This fallacy -- this destructive belief -- that all children cannot reach their full potential because of their race, their native language or their parents' income -- is an enduring impediment to the progress of American education.

No child in America, of any race, color or ethnic persuasion, can succeed if he or she falls for the lie that using your mind is a sign of weakness. If our children grow up thinking that excellence is only for somebody else, they will succumb to the very prejudice, stereotype and injustice that have done so much to damage others before them.

Third, there is an absolute and vital link between reform of elementary and secondary education and ongoing reform efforts in higher education. The United States should be justly proud of its remarkable achievement of creating the finest higher education system in the world. Our great research universities are the envy of other nations. Our community colleges reflect the best of our democratic tradition; that all Americans, without regard to rank or station, have the right to advance themselves.

Susan B. Anthony, whose birthday it is today, would be more than a little pleased by the fact that millions of women are getting a higher education and now make up the majority of students in our graduate and professional schools.

At the same time, we are, I think, at the threshold of a new and important public dialogue ... one only now beginning to emerge ... on the meaning of accountability and standards for higher education.

The very process of setting standards at the elementary and secondary level will have, by definition, an enormous impact on the higher education community. It will create a new public dynamic -- a public more aware, more involved, and more attuned to making the connection between schools and results. As standards are set, they will surely demand the reshaping of teacher education and encourage long overdue reform in this absolutely vital area of higher education.

In time, as standards take root and as expectations are raised,

the reform at the elementary and secondary level will better prepare the next generation of students to do college-level work; something you should expect and demand. This, in turn, will redefine how college faculty teach and what is taught, and will allow colleges to shift resources from remedial work to more challenging and engaging material earlier in the process.

The new quest for standards and accountability will surely intensify the ongoing debate on the balance that must be struck between research and teaching.

In addition, we must move with some urgency to create a system of postsecondary education for the neglected majority of high school graduates who now need more than a high school diploma to have a chance at life's success.

These students may not need four years of college but their education in youth apprenticeships must be no less rigorous. To offer anything less -- to suggest that we set standards only for the elite -- is, to my mind, less than democratic and surely no way to assure this nation's future economic prosperity.

So I encourage you to think about the shape of things to come and begin the important dialogue on the meaning of accountability for higher education. The federal government cannot and should not dictate the terms of this dialogue as it begins. We must be sensitive to the spirit of academic freedom that defines the independence of the academy and recognize the broad breadth of its diversity.

At the same time, the federal government cannot fail to recognize that it has done a less than adequate job in the past in ensuring that Pell Grant and other student loan recipients have gotten a quality education. We do not want -- and the American people will not accept -- a high default rate.

In the days ahead, we will be vigorous in our efforts to protect the integrity of the Pell Grant program against any breach of good faith. The American people and the higher education community deserve nothing less.

Fourth -- education has to connect with technology. We are determined that Vice-President Gore's challenge to link up every classroom in America to the Information Superhighway becomes a reality for all students.

I intend to do all I can to make sure that when the final deals are cut, the classroom won't be cut out. Because every child must be computer literate; and a new generation of teachers needs to learn new skills to make interactive learning a real experience.

Our schools cannot be the last institution in our society to come on-line. It makes no sense. Children seem to have a natural affinity for what's on the computer screen.

These four powerful connections -- involving parents -- reaching out to our minority youth -- linking the reform at the elementary and secondary level to new standards of excellence in higher education -- and ensuring education gets ahead of the game when it comes to new technology -- are all part of our expanding effort to connect America's children to a world-class education for the 21st century.

I cannot say that my own world view, from here in Washington, encompasses all that must be done to lift up American education. But let us begin somewhere. In the months ahead, we will release a series of papers that will probe, in greater depth, substantive issues I've touched on here that deserve our discussion and thoughtful attention.

I see these papers and work sessions -- on the role of parents in education -- on what must be done to achieve better results for children and youth with disabilities -- on accountability in higher education -- and on what to do when we wire up America's schools to the Information Superhighway -- as the beginning of a process to engage all Americans in making the new connections to prepare our children for the 21st century.

The students here at Georgetown and all across this great Country of ours want to make those connections. Many of them do just that despite the odds. They have high aspirations. They get connected, stay connected to learning and are achieving. Yet, all too often, we only see what is wrong with them ... instead of what they are doing to achieve.

Well, I want to tell these young people in a very direct way to hang in there -- the adults are working hard to get it right. We need your energy and imagination, your creativity and your sense of freedom. We need you in the science lab and in the recording studio ... on the basketball court and in the court of justice.

We need you to build the new American community ... whether you choose to be a nurse, a general, a teacher, a poet or perform some form of national service. America can only be America if you get connected and that is why I want better schools and higher standards.

I end my remarks now by going back to where I began -- to a love of learning -- to suggest to you that we are at a critical turning point where we can, together, move American education forward. This is the time.

The power to help our young people is here in this audience --

with all of you -- and the millions of teachers and business leaders, parents and senior citizens who recognize that our children are a living report card and a reflection of the caring and attention of the entire community.

John Dewey gave us this charge many years ago that has stood the test of time. "What the best and wisest parent wants for his [and may I say, her] child, that must be [what] the community wants for all of its children: Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; it destroys our democracy."

This is why we believe in high standards. This is why it is time for all Americans to connect up again with our children. Join us in this campaign for the future of our children -- parents and children re-connected -- schools and communities re-connected.

I urge you to make 1994 the beginning of a new era of excellence in education ... a new time of hope and promise for America's children.

Thank you.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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CONNECTING FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS TO HELP OUR CHILDREN SUCCEED

Raising a child is tough. So is educating a child.

The day-to-day reality of the American family is different today than a generation ago. Parents and children spend far less time together and almost all parents face an on-going struggle to balance the demands of their family life with their jobs. At a time when parents are under tremendous pressures that make them less able to participate in their children's lives, there is a greater need for them to be involved, particularly in education.

Parents recognize this need. According to a Newsweek--PTA poll, some 40 percent of parents all across the country believe they are not devoting enough time to their children's education. This issue - one of the biggest and most important affecting education today - will only be solved through a joint effort involving parents, schools and the community.

Schools must respond to the needs of parents and provide the supports necessary for them to be involved in their children's learning. At the same time, parents need to slow down their lives, stress the life-long importance of getting a good education, and serve as role models for their children.

Research confirms that, regardless of the economic, racial, or cultural background of the family, when parents are partners in their children's education, the results are improved student achievement, better school attendance, reduced dropout rates, and decreased delinquency.

Parents and families can make a big difference in the education of young people. The U.S. Department of Education is committed to dealing with this issue by emphasizing the importance of family-school partnerships in its major legislative initiatives: GOALS 2000 and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In addition, Secretary Riley is asking parents to become partners in a national family involvement campaign. This joint effort will connect families, schools, and communities to enable all children to meet high standards.

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The Family-School Connection

People who have worked with families and schools have suggested a number of concrete actions that parents, schools and communities can take now to help all children learn.

As their children's first teachers, **parents and families can**:

1. Schedule daily homework time. *Establish a time each day for your child to be engaged in academic work. Review it regularly. Provide a quiet, well-lighted place for study. Cut off TVs and radios. Also, discourage phone calls during work time. Encourage your child's efforts and be available for questions. Spend time discussing what she has learned.*

While schools have the responsibility of assigning meaningful work, students have the responsibility to complete it. Time spent on academic work at home is directly related to achievement.

2. Read together. *Read with your child and let them see you and older children read. Take your child to the library to get a library card and help them find books on their interests and hobbies.*

Studies show that when parents read to their children or listen to them read on a regular basis, achievement improves. Taking the time to read with children is the most successful way to encourage kids to read and is critical to a child's education.

3. Use TV wisely. *Establish a TV watching budget and help your child choose programs for viewing. Select programs to watch together and discuss.*

Parents need to use TV wisely by both limiting the amount of viewing and helping children select educational programs. When chosen carefully, some television programs can help increase interest in learning.

4. Keep in touch with the school. *Don't leave it up to the school to let you know how and what your child is doing. Stay aware of what your children are learning, what their assignments are, and how they are doing. Make a point of visiting the school and talking with the teachers. If you can't visit, schedule a phone call. Don't wait until there is a problem.*

Research on the performance of high school students has shown that parents who are consistently informed about their children's

progress can contribute to higher achievement. The partnership between parents and teachers is key to creating a climate at home and at school conducive to learning.

5. Offer praise and encouragement. *Encourage your child to put in the time and effort to complete assignments, to work hard. Encourage him to persevere. Cultivate a warm and supporting home atmosphere while also setting and enforcing standards for school work.*

Parents play a dominant role in influencing a child's confidence and motivation to become a successful learner. Parents should encourage children to complete assignments as well as introduce them to enrichment programs and outside experiences that will enhance their self confidence and broaden their interests.

6. Talk to your teenager. *Talk to your teenager. Know who your teen's friends are and keep tabs on their whereabouts. Support your teens in their school and extracurricular activities. Keep them involved in family activities. Continue to set and enforce rules. Stress their importance as a role model to younger siblings.*

Children and parents can learn a lot about each other just by talking. Parents should communicate their values openly with their teenager. By talking about the importance of values such as honesty, self-reliance, and responsibility, parents are helping their children make good decisions.

Schools Connecting With Parents

In order to make real change in our schools, parents must be directly involved in the education of their children. However, in order to sustain this involvement, there must be support from the schools, community, business, and governments.

In the effort to connect schools with parents, **schools can**:

1. Encourage families and teachers to establish learning compacts. Compacts would define the goals, expectations, and shared responsibilities of schools and parents as equal partners in student success. The agreements should be simply written in English or the native language of the parents where feasible. Compacts, used in conjunction with other school strategies, can strengthen the ties between families, students, and teachers; and

establish a stronger environment for learning.

2. Train school staff. Good schools value parental involvement and reach out to parents. Too often the school contacts parents only when there is a problem. In developing a partnership, training will be necessary for principals, teachers, and other school staff, as well as parents, to help all collaborators acquire the skills needed. Sustaining the partnerships is everybody's job.

3. Design homework that engages parents in the process. For example, long-term assignments would involve parents in the learning process in such ways as helping families construct family trees, recounting the family history, and describing their daily work.

4. Give parents a voice in decisions. Parents should be involved in decisions regarding their children's schooling. Schools can open options for parents to become involved individually and collectively in making decisions about goals and standards for their children and their schools.

5. Extend school hours. By staying open in the afternoon, evening, and on weekends, schools can allow students and families to engage in recreational and learning activities and provide adult education programs and training in parenting.

6. Create parent resource centers. Set aside an area in the school that invites parents to share their parenting experiences with other parents and to work with teachers and other school staff on school concerns.

Communities Connecting Parents and Schools

Communities can support the connections between families and schools in many ways. Communities can:

1. Contribute to the education of our next generation through volunteer time. Members of the community and local businesses can support family involvement by broadening the learning environment. Volunteers can assist in the schools either for special events or on a regular basis through tutoring or mentoring. Family and community involvement should be developed and sustained in support of student development through all grades. Also, by getting involved in a local community board, community members can have an impact on the local policy agenda.

2. Play a role in supporting the development of children and their families. Make community resources available to schools and families. Community organizations may reach out to families by providing services such as child care, after school programs, assistance with homework, parenting education programs, or youth and family counseling programs. Inviting education officials to address civic groups and congregations on school policies and positions is another way to sustain the partnership.

3. Support flexible scheduling time at work and special programs for parents to participate in their children's schooling. Employers could devise model time release programs that allow parents the time to volunteer in their children's schools without docking them for leave time. In addition, special programs on parenting and helping children with school work could be offered during lunchtime seminars. "Bring your child to work days" can also reinforce what is taught in the school with real on-the-job skills.

How the U.S. Department of Education Will Help

To begin the process, the **U.S. Department of Education** has launched GOALS 2000 that directly involves parents in standard-setting and bottom-up reform. The legislation also encourages collaborations across education and community services to assist families in supporting their children's education. The Administration's proposal for reauthorizing the federal elementary and secondary education programs would create compacts in Title I schools to enable parents and teachers to discuss common expectations and mutual responsibilities for their children. Parents in Title I schools will have a significant role in planning and implementing school reform and schools will afford parents opportunities to participate in parenting and other training programs.

The U.S. Department of Education will move forward with this campaign in several ways. It will:

- **Reach out to organizations that represent the interests of teachers, principals, and parents and engage them in a national media campaign to create better relations between home and school.** The Department is scheduling meetings with the PTA, the teachers and principals associations, and

the Chamber of Commerce to find out what they are currently doing and how these activities can be coordinated and brought under a broader umbrella. Televised town meetings, print media coverage, national talk shows, periodic national surveys, and formal programs are just a few of the means to be used to convey the parent involvement message to the American public.

- **Connect with other agencies for the campaign.** The Department will call upon other government agencies in addressing issues of family involvement. For example, the Head Start program within HHS, the concern with youth violence within the Justice Department, the School-to-Work interests of the Labor Department, can each be strengthened with closer collaboration, knowledge, and strategy-sharing among the organizations. The opportunity to use HUD housing projects as places to offer homework rooms and the National Park Service to provide learning experiences for families in the "great outdoors" can also be pursued.

- **Make the Department of Education an exemplary family-friendly work site.** The U.S. Department of Education, for example, has started a "Parenting in the Workplace" program which presents noon-time parenting seminars and produces a yearly Parenting Fair. The agency is also reviewing its personnel policies for changes that would encourage greater family participation and make it a model for the workplace.

For more information, please call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

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**RILEY SAYS NATION HAS A "MORAL URGENCY"
TO RECONNECT WITH CHILDREN AND EDUCATION**

Citing a decade in which the pace of school reform has been far too slow, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley today said "the time has come to move from the negative crisis of education to a positive solution."

Riley's remarks came in his first annual "State of American Education" address delivered before more than 700 students, parents, educators, business, labor and community leaders at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Riley said there is a compelling need for adults to reconnect with America's children. "If I am troubled by anything, it is this: we seem, as a nation, to be drifting toward a new concept of childhood which says that a child can be brought into this world and allowed to fend for himself or herself. There is a disconnection here that demands our attention ... a disconnection so pervasive between adult America and child America that we are all losing touch with one another."

There is, Riley said, "a moral urgency to our coming together ... a need to act ... to reconnect."

He announced a new family involvement campaign to encourage all adults -- whether parents, grandparents, stepparents, aunts, uncles, or close friends -- to take a special interest in a young person and guide that child's education. He encouraged schools, communities,

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and businesses to support the campaign by helping family members to help their children.

"I believe," Riley said, "that all parents, indeed any adult, regardless of his or her station in life or even their level of education, has the capacity and obligation to teach their children a love of learning."

The campaign will draw on the lessons learned from examining parental practices around the world and will teach a series of concrete steps that parents can do to become involved in their children's education.

This spring, the Secretary will also publish "Riley's Rules," a compendium of simple but helpful advice on education for parents. Riley said the Education Department is also planning to issue a series of papers devoted to close examination of major topics in education. The first will address the role of parents.

In his address, Riley focused on some of the obstacles education reform faces. He conceded that "education, like any institution in our society, can be intolerant of new thinking, bureaucratic, and reluctant to give up old habits." But he said there is evidence of "resiliency, the capacity for innovation, the early beginnings of a fundamental shift away from the old assembly-line version of education to something new."

Riley also warned that political bickering can set the reform movement back.

"Nothing can be accomplished," Riley said, "if we continue to hurl political invective... . At the same time, nothing is gained by the intransigence of some in the education community who see any outside reform or proposed innovation as unneeded, unwanted, and unnecessary...

"The public wants higher academic standards, more accountability, and some sense that their children are getting prepared for the coming times. They do not want a conservative or a liberal, nor a Democratic or Republican, solution to our nation's education troubles."

Riley cited two major administration initiatives nearing passage in the Congress -- the Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act -- as examples of the effort "to make higher educational standards a nationwide priority" and to encourage every citizen to participate in the reform process.

"Reform is best," he said, "when it is voluntary, inclusive, and bottom-up ... when we involve parents, teachers, and the entire community in putting children first." Riley said he supports such innovations as public school choice, charter schools, schools-within-schools, magnet schools, and efforts to expand early childhood and after-school programs. However, he rejected private school vouchers and cautioned that contracting outside firms to operate schools "may be one interesting option to try, but it is no panacea."

Returning to his call for reconnecting citizens and schools, Riley cited the "disconnect" between teachers and parents and noted that "the two most powerful groups of adults who can influence the course of education in this nation seem to be talking past each other."

Riley also said there is a vital need to reconnect with alienated minority youth and called the belief that some children cannot learn "impediments to the progress of American education." He added that "no child in America, of whatever race, color, or ethnic

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persuasion, can succeed if he or she falls for the lie that says using your mind is a sign of weakness."

Calling for high expectations and standards for all children, Riley said "a watered-down curriculum came to be and still remains, to my mind, the surest way of turning a child who can learn into an angry, illiterate 19-year-old dropout ... without hope."

Riley said he believes that new "connections" will be made and that education improvement will result. He said, " ... we are at a critical turning point where we can, together, move American education forward."

"When the American people put their collective mind to a problem, something good happens. We are at that moment."

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